



HARAMBEE FLAME

Oct.

1986

A Publication of the Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization



The Black Press: Journalism Or Jive

What is the "black press"? For the purposes of this article, "black press" refers to newspapers and magazines in the United States that are owned by African persons and are designed to appeal to an African mass readership--newspapers and magazines such as: MILWAUKEE COURIER, N.Y. AMSTERDAM NEWS, EBONY, JET, ESSENCE, etc. In asking what the "black press" is, we have to address the issue of function. What is the primary function of the "black press"? Is it that of informing us, serving as a political/social catalyst, or serving merely as a vehicle by which its owners achieve and/or maintain financial solvency?

In view of the fact that most, and prob-

ably all, of the African-owned newspapers and magazines of the type spoken of here are capitalist(as opposed to cooperative) enterprises, it is obvious that their owners must be concerned about whether they make money or lose it. But we are speaking here about primary functions. Does the owner of the JACKSON ADVOCATE, for example, publish that paper for the main purpose of serving the African community in Jackson, Mississippi by informing it or

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THE BLACK PRESS: JOURNALISM OR JIVE; FROM OTHER SOURCES: African Conservatives, Health Conditions in N.Y., Gold Mine Disaster, Political Forms In Burkina Faso, Women In African Agriculture; ANNOUNCEMENTS

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or for the main purpose of turning a profit? If a given African-owned magazine or newspaper's primary function is that of informing its readership, how does that magazine or newspaper's publisher or editor define "information"? Does he or she see "information" as being simply a reportage of inert facts, statistics, speculation, etc.? Or does that publisher or editor have a political, social, or other vision and view "information" as a particular kind of compilation of facts, figures, and editorials meant to make that vision visible to and understood by his or her publication's readership?

The answers to these questions are certainly not precisely the same as applied to all of the "black press." But we do notice some general tendencies. Most of the better known African-owned magazines and newspapers express a perspective which accepts the American political/economic status quo as being unchangeable and/or fundamentally desirable. For instance, while there were African-owned newspapers which gave lip-service to the '84 Jackson campaign for the presidency, few, if any, of them have advocated that we make a move in the direction of political self-reliance and jump the Republican and Democratic ships.

Most of the "black press" has little or no conception of African people in America being anything other than "blacks" or "black Americans." If Pan-Africanism formed a significant portion of these publications' ideological frames of reference, we would see more coverage of events and developments taking place in Africa and throughout the diaspora. Even with regard to coverage of events in Azania(So. Africa), one gets a sense, in reading these publications, of African people in Azania being essentially foreign to and separate from African folks born in the U.S.

When we examine the "black press" in a cultural vein, we frequently notice fashions and systems of coverage of

events which strongly suggest perceptions on the parts of editors and/or publishers in which American-born Africans are and/or should be Caucasians who "happen to be black." Consider the preoccupation on the parts of many African-owned newspapers with coverage of debutante balls, cotillions, beautillions, dinners and receptions at which favored African folks receive awards from Caucasian businessmen or politicians, etc. Along these same lines, consider the question of fashion and modeling. Why is it that, during any given month, one can pick up a copy of EBONY MAGAZINE and look at the various African women pictured in advertisements and fashion and find that practically all of these women are light-skinned and that most of both these women and those very few who come close to being dark have distinctly European features. The simple fact is that broad noses, thick lips, dark skin, and wooly hair are part of our African heritage. Yet EBONY, JET, and numerous other magazines and newspapers owned by African people go to great lengths to promote the physical "de-Africanizing" of ourselves through the pushing of hair-straighteners and "relaxers," skin-lighteners, and even cosmetic surgery.

Moving back to politics, many African-owned publications will occasionally attack Caucasian politicians for being racist but commonly are terribly squeamish when it comes to criticizing African politicians when they perform in ways that are clearly destructive to the interests of African people. How could a "black press" functioning on behalf of African people not have condemned Wilson Goode for his role in the murder of the children and adults of MOVE? On May 15, 1984 U.S. Marine corporal Alfred Griffin was sentenced at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina to four months hard labor, loss of six months pay, and received other penalties for his refusal to go to Lebanon and for his subsequent refusal to participate in the U.S. invasion of Grenada. This American-born African stated that he had refused these as-

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signments on the basis of his principles, principles that did not permit him to kill Muslims or Africans. On July 11, 1985, Sharon Scranage was arrested by the F.B.I. for informing a Ghanaian national of the identities of C.I.A. operatives doing covert work in Ghana. In both these instances, African people in the U.S. performed an important service for other African people. Both of these persons should have been lauded for their actions by the "black press." African-owned magazines and newspapers in this country should have editorialized strongly in urging financial help and vocalized support for Alfred Griffin and Sharon Scranage. But this did not occur. Yet the "black press" regularly pays tribute to American-born Africans gaining rank in Uncle Sam's military. Each year during "black history" month, we are "treated" to homage-paying features on American-born African soldiers who showed their "heroism" in killing Native Americans, Koreans, Vietnamese, and other people of color for Uncle Sam.

Of course many other examples could be cited as illustrations of how the "black press" in general functions in the interests of some people other than ourselves. And examples could be given which would show how the "black press" has served us and served us very positively. Nevertheless, the point is that, overall, the "black press," while purporting to serve us and our communities, is typically little more than warmed-over versions of that print medium owned by Caucasians; and its typically white-in-black-face brand of journalism serves to perpetuate our domination in this country and to promote our continuing acceptance of it.

As African people concerned about our collective interests, we are obligated to take measures to support that tiny segment of the "black press" which truly serves us and to demand much more of that majority of African-owned publications which have given us jive rather than journalism.

-Mondo(aka David Rice)/FLAME Editor

FLAME Editorial Policy

The ~~HARAMBEE~~ FLAME, the monthly publication of the Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization, is a Pan-Africanist newsletter. This means that the FLAME's priority, with respect to news and views, is African people and events and developments which affect us and are, or should be, of concern to us. The FLAME does not recognize any artificial distinctions among African people based solely on place of birth. Therefore, references to African people are made on the basis of our common ancestry. An exception to this policy is the reprinting of articles, or excerpts thereof, from other publications, in which cases we do not alter the terms used therein to fit our editorial policy.

Articles contained in the FLAME do not necessarily represent the official positions of the Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization unless they are accompanied by a statement identifying the views as being those of the organization. Generally speaking, all unsigned articles are by the editor.

We encourage you to submit articles to the FLAME. Please enclose with your submission a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Articles should not exceed 900 words. Short stories are subject to the same restriction with respect to length. We also welcome poetry and graphics. Send your submissions to:

Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization
Attn: Mondo
P.O. Box 2500
Lincoln, NE
68502-0500

Correction

In the previous edition of the FLAME, we erroneously listed Pamoja Tutashinda as being a student at the University of Nebraska at Lincoln. She is, in fact, a student at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. The second part of her article, "Dealing With Crisis," will appear in the November FLAME.

FROM OTHER SOURCES

Political Turn On The Part Of Former

Civil Rights Advocates

"In the 1960s, (James) Bevel was a critically important figure in the desegregation campaigns. With Marion Barry, James Lawson and John Lewis, Bevel led the successful sit-in movement in Nashville. Bevel was a key strategist and stalwart for Martin Luther King Jr. in the difficult Birmingham desegregation campaign of 1963...

"(Ralph David) Abernathy was, of course, second only to Martin as a pivotal leader of the Southern struggle from Montgomery to Memphis...

"In the 1980 election, Abernathy took a decisive step away from King's political legacy by endorsing Ronald Reagan for the presidency...

"Abernathy and Bevel drifted even further to the right after 1980. Bevel became a Republican party leader in Chicago's Black community, and soon earned the reputation as an extremist of the right...

"...This fall, (Roy) Innis ran an unsuccessful campaign in the Democratic primary against progressive Black Rep. Major Owens of Brooklyn. Innis received support in his effort from the National Rifle Association, and was endorsed by Bernhard Goetz, the controversial 'subway vigilante.' Since the mid-1970s, Innis has championed the cause of Jonas Savimbi, the apartheid-supported terrorist and leader of the Angolan rebel group Unita."

-Above passages excerpted from "La-Rouche And Moon Seeking A Black Base," which appears on page 2 of the October 1 edition of THE GUARDIAN

Health Conditions For Africans In Harlem

"...According to a report commissioned by the New York State Health Department, patients undergoing major surgery die two and a half times as frequently in city hospitals as in private hospitals (7.86 per thousand patients compared to 2.97 per thousand). Harlem Hospital, in fact, has the second-highest mortality rate of any major big city hospital in the U.S...In part this reflects the criminal practice of 'dumping,' where private hospitals unload nonpaying patients onto overloaded, underfinanced, underequipped and understaffed public facilities.

"...Diseases most people think vanished years ago run rampant--tuberculosis, for example. Residents of Central Harlem had a reported rate of TB of 104.1 per 100,000 in 1982--ten times the national average. Nationwide, black infant mortality rates are double that for whites in this country. In Harlem the neonatal mortality rate (first 28 days) is not much different (actually lower) than the rest of the city, but by age one it surges to 21.1 per thousand live births (one-third above the rate for the city as a whole). Moreover, almost one in ten babies born in Central Harlem suffers from low birth weight, more than double the citywide average."

-Above passages excerpted from "Harlem Hospital Hell" on pages 16 and 15 of the September 26 edition of WORKERS VANGUARD.

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From Other Sources

South African Gold-mining Industry

"On September 16 at least 177 gold miners, all but five of them black, were killed in the worst gold mine disaster in the history of South Africa. In addition, at least 235 were seriously injured and five others were reported missing and presumed dead..."

"It was certainly not just a coincidence that almost all of those killed or injured at the Kinross Gold Mine were black. The same would have been true at any mine in South Africa. In the hundred years since gold was first discovered in South Africa an average of somewhere between 500 and 600 miners have been killed each year, and just about all of them have been black.

"South African gold mines are among the most difficult and dangerous to work in the world. Most tunnels are 5,000 feet or more deep. These tunnels are hot and wet all of the time and, especially at the mine's base they are generally so small that the miners have to squat all day long in order to work the mine. As the general rule the hardest and most dangerous work is done by black work gangs..."

"The vast majority of those killed at Kinross were migrant workers from Lesotho and Mozambique. Under apartheid law the black work force in the mining industry must be 97 percent migrant labor drawn from South African bantustans and the neighboring African countries. These migrants spend eleven months of the year working underground and living in run-down single-sex hostels that radiate out from the main mineshaft. Most of the time these hostels are within a fenced-off mining company compound and completely cut off from the rest of the black population in the area. By using migrant labor almost exclusively, the mining companies are enabled to ensure a high rate of profit..."

-Above passages excerpted from "The Gold Mine Murders," which appears on page 5 of the September 22 edition of REVOLUTIONARY WORKER

New Political Structures In Burkina Faso

"In Burkina(formerly Upper Volta), new political structures and processes are being built to give practical expression to the new ideas and new concepts being introduced. Typical is the establishment of the Committees for the Defence of the Revolution(CDRs)--which form the basic political structures in all villages, workplaces and wards. Through the CDRs, the people can actually exercise a measure of control on local and national affairs and despite their limitations they have helped to create confidence in the Burkinabe--confidence that the problem is not beyond his capacity to solve--and are now clearly the major vehicle for organizing and mobilizing the resources in the country for the fight against the drought..."

-Above passage excerpted from "Hope In Mass Mobilization," an article by Rufai Ibrahim which appears on page 9 of the June-July edition of AFRICA EMERGENCY.

African Women Form Agricultural Backbone

Percentage of food systems tasks performed by women on the African continent:

clearing land	- 5%
turning soil	- 30%
planting	- 50%
weeding & hoeing	- 70%
harvesting	- 60%
carrying crops home	- 80%
storing	- 80%
processing	- 90%
marketing	- 60%
carrying water & fuel	- 90%
domestic animal care	- 50%
hunting	- 10%
cooking & family care	- 95%

-The above figures are taken from edition #10 of the United Nation's DEVELOPMENT REVIEW. These figures reflect women's participation in food production and distribution in Africa generally. They do not reflect the considerable variation in this participation level in individual countries, ethnic groupings, etc.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

AFRICA EMERGENCY, a periodical which reports on problems related to hunger, economic crises, etc. on the African continent, provides the following:

"Free Reports On The African Crisis"

For the price of a telephone call, your radio station can receive, free of charge, a two-minute voice report, with actuality, on the latest developments related to the African crisis. Please contact International Broadcast Centre, United Nations Radio, New York, N.Y. 10017, or telephone Lelei LeLaulu, (212) 754-7201. To receive the report itself, please telephone: (212) 754-7656 between 9 a.m. and 6 p.m. EST."

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Performance Sites For DIFFERENT DANCES

"Different Dances," which premiered in Harlem's Roger Furman's New Heritage Theatre on August 29, is scheduled for several performances in Omaha. The play, written by W.M.E. we Langa and directed by Laura-Partridge-Nedds, addresses the issue of teenage pregnancy as a symptom of the assault upon the human spirit by American mass-culture. "Different Dances" speaks primarily through the media of dance, music, movement, and visual symbolism. Performances are free and open to the public.

There will be a preview at 8 p.m. Oct. 10 at Franklin Learning Center, 3506 Franklin St. Additional performances for the month of October are scheduled for: Oct. 11 at Field Club School(3512 Walnut St.), Oct. 12 at Burke High School(12200 Burke St.), Oct. 18 at Horace Mann Ninth Grade Center(3720 Florence Blvd.), Oct. 25 at LaFern Williams Center(30th. & R Sts.), Oct. 26 at Ralston High School(90th. St. & Park Drive). All performances, except for the preview at Franklin Learning Center, will begin at 3:00 p.m.

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Front cover: The news headlines on the cover taken from back issues of the OMAHA STAR.

Controversial Series, THE AFRICANS,

To Be Aired On PBS

Beginning on Thursday, October 9, at 9 p.m., local(Lincoln and Omaha) PBS stations 12 and 26 will air a nine-part weekly series, "The Africans," written and presented by Kenyan educator and author, Ali A. Mazrui. The series will examine, among other things, the roles played in African history by the continent's own traditions as well as Arabic and European influences.

A furor has arisen around "The Africans" based on accusations that it casts Europeans/Caucasians in a negative light relative to their roles in and actions toward Africa and its people. In view of slavery, colonialism, and the grand theft of African resources by the West, the fact that this series has raised the ire of Lynne Cheney of the National Endowment For The Humanities, as well as other Caucasians, suggests that this may very well be a series worth watching.

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H.A.C.O. Meeting Dates

The Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization meets approximately four times per month. We encourage you to get involved with us. Below are listed our meeting dates for October through December. Our meetings are held at 6 p.m. at the Nebraska State Prison at 14th & Pioneer in Lincoln.

<u>October</u>	<u>November</u>	<u>December</u>
7 Tue	4 Tue	2 Tue
14 Tue	9 Sun	7 Sun
26 Sun	18 Tue	16 Tue
	23 Sun	21 Sun
		30 Tue

For additional information, write to: Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization; P.O. Box 2500; Lincoln, NE; 68502-0500. Or call 471-3161 (ext. 379 or 380) between the hours of noon and three, Monday through Friday. If you wish to present an educational program, send your letter "Attn: Educ. Chrmn."